

CLAIMS

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1. A license devolution apparatus wherein a first storage medium for storing therein contents encrypted with a predetermined key, a first media ID for identifying one's own self, and a first encryption secure information on which the key and a first use information representative of a right of using as to the contents are encrypted together with one another or individually with the first media ID, and a second storage medium for storing therein a second media ID for identifying one's own self are accessed so that the right of using as to the contents stored in said first storage medium is devolved from said first storage medium to said second storage medium, said license devolution apparatus comprising:

decoding means for decoding the first encryption secure information stored in said first storage medium using the first media ID to obtain the key and the first use information; and

encryption means for encrypting the key obtained through decoding by said decoding means and a second use information representative of a second right of using in which a first right of using represented by the first use information obtained through decoding by said decoding means

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is transferred or distributed, together with one another or individually with the second media ID to generate a second encryption secure information into storage in said second storage medium.

2. A license devolution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption means encrypts a third use information representative of a third right of using obtained through subtracting the second right of using from the first right of using, or both the key and the third right of using with the first media ID, and write encrypted ones into the first storage medium, so that the first storage medium stores therein a third encryption secure information in which both the key and the third use information are encrypted with the first media ID, instead of the first encryption secure information.

3. A license devolution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein in the event that entire rights of using as to the contents, to which the first storage medium is entitled, are devolved to the second storage medium, said encryption means generates the key obtained through decoding by said decoding means and the second use information in which the second use information representative of the second right of using

succeeded to the first right of using in its entirety is encrypted, into storage in the second storage means, and destroys the key constituting the first encryption secure information stored in the first storage medium.

4. A license devolution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein before devolution of the right of using as to contents, the first storage medium stores therein encrypted contents as to which the right of using is intended to be devolved, and

wherein said license devolution apparatus further comprises contents transfer means for reading the encrypted contents of interest in devolution stored in the first storage medium, and storing in the second storage medium the contents thus read in form of an encryption.

5. A license devolution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first use information and the second use information are representative of the presence of the right of using, and the third use information is representative of the absence of the right of using.

6. A license devolution apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first use information is representative of a

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first available number of times or available time, the second use information is representative of a second available number of times or available time which is less than the first available number of times or available time, and the third use information is representative of a third available number of times or available time which is obtained through subtracting the second available number of times or available time from the first available number of times or available time.

7. A license devolution apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a first drive and a second drive for driving the first storage medium and the second storage medium, respectively, said first drive and said second drive having a first firmware and a second firmware for accessing the first storage medium and the second storage medium, respectively,

wherein said decoding means and said encryption means are arranged in a firmware consisting of said first firmware and said second firmware in form of a composite unit; and

wherein only said first firmware has authority to access the first storage medium driven by said first drive, and only said second firmware has authority to access the second storage medium driven by said second drive.

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